

# research snapshot

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## A Research Agenda for “Temporary” Migrants in Canada

### What is this research about?

While citizenship gives people the right to be “permanent”, migrants have to deal with the limits of being “temporary”. Their presence is often measured by a limited period of stay, and with conditions on their behaviour and activities. Refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers (TFWs), and international students are entitled to different rights and have differential access to permanent residence and citizenship.

Canada is in the process of re-assessing the pathways for migrants to access permanent residency and citizenship. Temporary migration is becoming an important way for select migrants to gain long-term residence. Canada’s TFW programs and refugee determination system are under close public and policy scrutiny. More evidence-based policy research is needed to inform stakeholders and policy development.

### What did the researchers do?

The researchers reviewed academic literature, media articles and government publications on being temporary in Canada. They drew out recurring themes that pertained to three wide migrant groups: asylum seekers, TFWs, and international students.

### What you need to know:

The existing research on refugees, TFWs, and international students looks at their experiences and challenges separately. There needs to be an increase in comparative and longitudinal quantitative data and research that compares across the different temporary migrant categories. It is crucial for policy-makers to establish a research agenda together with academics to inform policy developments related to immigration, integration, multiculturalism, settlement and citizenship.

### What did the researchers find?

Immigration has had a crucial role in nation building in Canada. Immigration policies over time have named “desirable” migrants who are supported in their efforts to become a citizen, explicitly excluding other “undesirable” migrants. This approach continues to influence Canada today. Often, the intent is to “rotate” migrants that are labelled as low-skilled workers and enable those labelled as high-skilled workers to become permanent.

The researchers found that there were notable gaps in the existing literature on refugee claimants, TFWs and international students in Canada. Previous research noted how the refugee experience is gendered and more difficult for children and youth

(especially young women). In Canada, there is a lack of studies that compare refugee claimants and resettled refugees (who arrive as permanent residents), as well as gender- and youth-based challenges.

The research on Canada's TFW programs show:

- There are seismic changes in the numbers of migrant workers.
- Employers of low-skilled workers are increasingly filling long-term labour shortages with foreign workers who are not entitled to social assistance and pathways to settle permanently.
- Racist elements across all programs continue to keep TFWs outside of the everyday realms of citizens.

There is little research that looks at the experiences of TFWs after gaining permanent status and citizenship in Canada. Also, there is a lack of work on the effects of recent policy changes or closures of certain programs.

Finally, a majority of research on international students focuses on the experiences of Asian students in the US, UK, and Australia. More research is needed on Canadian students' experiences that are gendered, racialized and classed. Also, research could focus on students' distinct ways of integrating. This research can then be compared across different sending and receiving states.

### How can you use this research?

Temporary migration involves multiple stakeholders including policy makers, researchers and community agencies. Policy makers may find this study useful to fill some gaps in evidence-based policy-research, prioritize funding and select research and policy directions. All stakeholders may use this study as a spring board to consider ways of bridging research objectives to address the distinct experiences of

different groups with temporary status at once.

### About the Researchers

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### Keywords

Migrants, Refugees, Asylum seekers, Temporary foreign workers, International students, Policy, Research, Citizenship, Rights

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